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Fact Sheet

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Portland Harbor Portland, Oregon

USEPA SF



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This fact sheet is designed to introduce you to activities underway by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) related to Portland Harbor. It covers background information about the area and related environmental concerns, introduces you to the Superfund program, and tells you how to get more information. More fact sheets will be published in the future to keep you up to date, and to give you more information about how you can become involved.

Portland Harbor Sediment Investigation Activities Underway

Background. In 1997, at the request of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducted a sediments sampling study along a five and a half mile stretch of the lower Willamette River. For the purposes of the investigation, called a site assessment, the area between the southern tip of Sauvie Island and Swan Island was designated as the Portland Harbor study area. The objective of the study was to characterize sediment quality at and between existing active cleanup sites in the harbor. Sampling results showed that sediments are contaminated with elevated levels of compounds such as DDT, polychlorinated biphenyls, heavy metals, and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons.

Much of the upland area along the Willamette River within Portland Harbor is heavily industrialized, and marine traffic within the river is intensive. Within the 5.5-mile project area several industrial operations have been identified as potential contamination sources. Past and present industrial operations include hazardous waste storage; marine construction; bulk petroleum product storage; oil fire fighting training activities; oil gasification plant operations; wood treating; agricultural chemical production; battery processing; liquid natural gas plant operations; chlorine

production; ship loading and unloading; ship maintenance and repair; and rail car manufacturing.

The initial evaluation by ODEQ and EPA has lead EPA to consider the possibility of placing the harbor area on the National Priorities List (NPL). The NPL is a list of the nation's most contaminated hazardous waste sites. Sites listed on the NPL are commonly called Superfund sites. Based on the results of the 1997 sediment investigation, it is likely that Portland Harbor will rank as an NPL-caliber site. However, ODEQ and EPA are currently considering a variety of management options that would maintain state lead on the project, yet fulfill the interests of many stakeholders.

On November 30, 1998, ODEQ signed an agreement with the Portland Harbor Group, a coalition comprised of private and public entities owning property or conducting business within the Portland Harbor area. Coalition members agreed to fund ODEQ work to develop the Portland Harbor Sediment Management Plan (PHSMP) that will provide the framework for a state led evaluation of Portland Harbor contaminated sediments. Development of the plan is underway. Members of the Portland Harbor Group, EPA, federal and state natural resource trustee agencies, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are all working with ODEQ to address plans for sediment screening, site discovery, agency coordination, public involvement, and plan implementation. These plans will also

address funding, enforcement, and remedy selection if needed. For more information about ODEQ's PHSMP, please contact Kim Cox at 503/229-6590, or email at cox.kim@deq.state.or.us.

Next Steps. Based on site investigation results, EPA's Site Assessment Program is completing a *Hazard Ranking System* evaluation, a ranking exercise to determine whether the study area is eligible for listing on the NPL. Data from the site assessment will be evaluated by an EPA panel known as the Regional Decision Team which will meet in May 1999 to decide whether this site should be proposed for NPL listing. ODEQ can participate in this evaluation as a member of the Team. The Team may choose to examine alternatives to NPL listing, such as a formal deferral to ODEQ. Under the deferral option, the state would conduct work in the Portland Harbor, instead of EPA. ODEQ will complete the PHSMP by May 1999, and the document will

be reviewed as part of the listing decision.

Should the Team choose to propose NPL listing for Portland Harbor, a listing package would be developed and forwarded to EPA's national Headquarters for their review and final determination. If EPA Headquarters were to concur on a listing proposal, notice would be published in the Federal Register and a public comment period would follow. Only after public comments were reviewed and addressed would a final decision be made regarding site listing.

EPA will wait until May 1999, when the Regional Decision Team convenes, before making any further decisions regarding this site's eligibility for listing on the NPL. In the interim, EPA is participating with other stakeholders in the development of the PHSMP and is working closely with ODEQ to explore the potential for deferral. Requirements that must be fulfilled in order for deferral to occur are outlined on page 3.

What is Superfund?

Superfund is a program administered by EPA. Congress established the Superfund program in 1980 under a law called the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). The purpose of this law is to identify and clean up the nation's most dangerous uncontrolled and abandoned hazardous waste sites. Under this law, Congress established a trust fund to pay for investigations and cleanups at sites where no responsible parties were available or willing to pay for the work. This fund has come to be known as Superfund.

To identify the highest priority sites in the nation for inclusion in the Superfund program, EPA ranks sites using the Hazard Ranking System. Sites that meet the criteria of the Hazard Ranking System may be proposed for inclusion on the National Priorities List (NPL).

CERCLA is a law that gives EPA broad authority to require investigation and cleanup at sites listed on the NPL. Alternatively, at sites where the responsible parties are willing to conduct the necessary investigations and cleanup a state can enter into legally binding agreements with these parties to ensure that the work proceeds according to CERCLA regulatory and technical requirements even without an NPL listing.

Ultimately, the goal of the Superfund program is a thorough and timely assessment of contamination, and a cleanup that will protect human health and the environment. Community involvement is a cornerstone of the process. The assessment and cleanup process is designed to:

- identify contaminated areas of concern;
- assess the level and extent of contamination;
- evaluate risks to the public and the environment;
- determine cleanup levels protective of human health and the environment;
- take cleanup measures to ensure long-term protection of human health and the environment;
- if possible, accelerate actions at specific locations to facilitate reuse of the site and surrounding areas.

Deferral Requirements

In order for EPA to consider deferring an NPL-caliber site to state authorities, certain assurances must be provided. These include:

- The state program must have sufficient capabilities, resources, and expertise to ensure that a CERCLA protective cleanup is conducted. (See section called "What is Superfund?")
- The state must coordinate with EPA, other interested agencies, and the public at various stages of implementation.
- The state must have statutory authority to pursue all necessary enforcement actions at a site, authority to compel parties to conduct a cleanup, and statutory, regulatory, and administrative provisions that ensure that remedies are protective of human health and the environment.
- The quality of the response action should be substantially similar to a response action required under CERCLA.
- Viable and cooperative parties must be available to conduct a response action.
- The ability to perform response actions without Superfund resources must exist.
- There must be assurance that the remedy will comply with all applicable, relevant, and appropriate federal and state requirements
- There must be demonstration of community acceptance. The "community" includes downstream communities, responsible parties, Natural Resource Trustees, and others.

Other EPA Superfund Activities in Portland Harbor

Two Superfund (NPL) sites are located in the Portland Harbor study area, the Gould site and the McCormick and Baxter site. Pertinent data from these sites will be incorporated into the greater Portland Harbor sediment study effort.

Gould Superfund Site:

The Gould Site is a former lead smelter located about 1,000 feet from the Willamette River. Soils, surface water, and sediments in East Doane Lake were found to be contaminated with lead. Site investigation is complete and cleanup is in progress. Dredging, dewatering, and stockpiling of lake sediments contaminated with lead and organics, including herbicides and pesticides, was completed in 1998. Other cleanup activities have included excavation and treatment of lead-contaminated battery casings, soil, and debris to recover lead and casing material for recycling. Disposal of contaminated sediment, soil, debris and battery casings will occur in an on-site containment facility scheduled to be under construction this summer.

McCormick and Baxter Superfund Site:

An initial study of the site and cleanup options was completed at this creosoting site in 1996. The site is located along the east bank of the Willamette River immediately upstream from the Burlington Northern Railroad bridge. Soil and groundwater at the site and sediments in the adjacent Willamette River are heavily contaminated. Contaminants of concern include polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, pentachlorophenol, and arsenic. Warning signs have been installed around contaminated areas. Cleanup activities will include excavation and off-site disposal of contaminated soil this year, followed by a sitewide cap of clean soil. Design of groundwater enhancements may begin this year. A cap is planned to be placed on contaminated river sediments following installation of the final groundwater remedy. In a unique site management approach, ODEQ is managing site cleanup using state contractors, with EPA funding provided by a cooperative agreement.

Brownfields and Portland Harbor

Brownfields are abandoned, idled, or underused industrial and commercial properties where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived contamination. In May 1997, Vice President Al Gore announced a Brownfields National Partnership to bring together the resources of more than fifteen Federal agencies to address local cleanup and reuse issues in a coordinated manner. This multi-agency partnership has pledged support at sixteen "Showcase Communities"-models demonstrating the benefits of collaborative activity on brownfields.

Portland is designated as a Showcase Community Project. This project will build on progress made in the Portland

Brownfields Initiative pilot project funded by EPA in 1996. To support this project, EPA is providing \$200,000 to the City of Portland over two years. EPA is also providing a full-time employee to the City. This commitment to the City will remain in place regardless of the Portland Harbor listing decision, as will our commitment to work with stakeholders to plan and implement site cleanups in ways that encourage redevelopment. For more information on the City's Showcase Project, please contact Jeanne Caswell, at 503/823-7053.

EPA policy to date is that brownfields monies should be targeted at non-NPL sites. However, there are areas that can be targeted for Brownfields redevelopment that are not likely to be part of the study area now being considered for listing under Superfund.

What About Ross Island?

Ross Island is upstream from the site assessment sediment investigation and is not directly related to the Superfund investigation. Several disposals of sediments dredged from the Willamette River have been permitted for confinement in Ross Island over the years. In addition, as part of its required reclamation, Ross Island Sand and Gravel (facility owners and operators) has accepted large volumes of other materials for in-water and uplands fill. Some of this material has been determined to be solid waste and is suspected to contain hazardous substances. ODEQ, with the assistance of the Port of Portland, is undertaking a study to evaluate what past disposals have occurred at Ross Island and to assess whether those past actions may be of concern today. This assessment was requested by Governor Kitzhaber who also requested the development of a statewide Sediment Management Plan and guidelines. That effort is being initiated, also under ODEQ lead, and is expected to involve other state and federal agencies.

Of Note....

~Corps of Engineers has submitted an Environmental Impact Statement for a channel-deepening project in the Columbia and Willamette Rivers to EPA for review. The channel passes through the Portland Harbor study area.

~EPA has identified Lower Willamette River as one of 96 watersheds in the country of most probable concern for contaminated sediments.

~In July 1998, Vice President Gore designated the Willamette as one of fourteen American Heritage Rivers.

~NOAA recently listed steelhead as a threatened species in the Lower Willamette River.

For information or to request mailing list changes, please contact:

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from Chris - info. on mgmt. plan (continue?)

- ODEQ lead cleanup efforts

- overall watershed/watershed activities (USEPA - Willamette Basin)
H2O quality data

EPA has watershed champions (area)
overall health